

Testimony at Congressional Briefing

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I understand that there are matters of urgent concern to the U.S. as far as foreign relations toward China are concerned. Trade, currency exchange, peace on the Korean peninsula, as well as arms sales to and relations with Taiwan, are but a few of the outstanding issues. But I want to respectfully point you to an even more fundamental complexity in the relationship that must be addressed. Assuming it is the goal of both countries to improve and expand their existing political and economic foundations for a mutually beneficial relationship over the coming decades, this issue simply will not go away.

It is the matter of how Mr. Hu's government treats its own citizens.

Today, China is the only country in the world that imprisons a Nobel peace prize winner. To make matters worse, after Liu Xiaobo won the Nobel Prize, his wife was put under house arrest and lost all the contact with the outside world. This was done all without any proper legal procedure. This alone tells us one thing: the Chinese government's abuse of human rights goes beyond anything we imagined.

China is the country with the most prisoners-of-conscience in the world. I bring along a partial list of 109 names of imprisoned writers. None of the men and women on this list has engaged in violence or any other form of criminal activity. All they did was exercising China's constitutional right of the freedom of expression, yet they were imprisoned under harsh sentences.

In addition, it is practically public knowledge that in China that there exist hundreds of un-registered prisons established and run at various levels of Chinese local government. These prisons take in numerous innocent citizens without any legal procedures, as long as the government suspects them of "affecting society's stability." Currently, my organization, *Initiatives for China*, is carrying out projects to systematically investigate and expose this phenomenon.

Furthermore, China's policies and practices on land expropriation and house demolition have seriously interfered in people's lives and basic human rights. We estimate that over the past decade, at least 10,000 people have lost their lives directly due to land expropriation and housing demolition. China's economic growth is actually not only built upon large-scale robbery of its own citizens, but is paid with the price of people's freedom and lives.

Due to time constraints, I will not elaborate on all of the human rights violations in China. Instead, I want to briefly report to you on the three new types of measures that the Chinese authorities have been increasingly using in the past three years to control and persecute dissidents, which go beyond the official prison system.

1. Direct Violence against Dissidents

Direct violence against dissidents and human rights activists has increased in recent years. Liu Xiaobo, Sun Wenguang, Ai Momo, Li Heping, Cheng Hai, Zhang Kai, Li Chunfu, Liu Linna, Liu Dejun, Xiao Qingshan, Chen Yunfei, Zhu Juru ,etc. are among those who were beaten in various areas of China. The people who have been doing these things are local policemen or rogues hired by the police. Some government officials are also involved. When these dissidents and human rights activists reported the crimes against them, neither the police nor the local government did anything to punish the perpetrators or prevent such violence from happening again.

2. House Arrest

In recent years, house arrest has gradually become more widely used by local governments as a means for limiting dissidents and petitioners. Such means are even applied to the family members of dissidents and petitioners. Yuan Weijing and Liu Xia are two typical examples. As the wife of the blind human rights lawyer Chen Guangcheng, Yuan Weijing was placed under house arrest not long after Chen Guangcheng had been arrested. Ever since Chen Guangcheng was released after serving 4 years and 3 months in prison last September, the entire family has been put under house arrest. The Chens have been cut off from all contact with the outside world. Those who have tried to visit them were badly beaten. Liu Xia, Liu Xiaobo's wife, has been put under house arrest ever since Oct.8, 2010, when the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced they would award the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, and her communication with the outside world has been totally cut off since Oct. 20. 2010. One can only imagine what she has been through and what her current situation is.

3. "Made Disappearance"

I also urge you to pay attention to the "disappearance" of Chinese citizens as the result of the government's unwarranted actions. The most notorious case is Gao Zhisheng. Gao Zhisheng, a prominent human rights lawyer who represented religious minorities in China, was "disappeared" by the government in April 2010. His wife, Geng He, who secretly fled to the United States and sought asylum with her two children, Peter and Grace, has come to Washington this week and joins us here today. Though named by the Ministry of Justice as one of China's top lawyers in 2001, after he took politically sensitive cases, the government revoked his license, shuttered his law firm, and placed his family under surveillance. Repeatedly detained, authorities severely tortured him in 2007 after he wrote a letter to the United States Congress detailing human rights abuses in China. In February 2009, authorities held him without charge for over a year, during which time his captors again tortured him. After intense international pressure, the government briefly released him in March of last year. However, after only a few weeks, the government abducted him again in April. He has not been heard from since.

Mongolian scholar Hada was arrested in Dec. 1995 because of founding the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance and subsequently organizing a number of peaceful demonstrations demanding more autonomy for the Mongolian region. On Dec. 6, 1996, after a year of detention without trial, he was charged with the crimes of separatism and espionage for (the independent state of) Mongolia and sentenced to 15 years in jail. His 15-year prison term was set to end on Dec. 10, 2010. However, a few days before that, Chinese authorities arrested his wife, Xinna,

and son, Uiles. Hada was never seen getting out of prison, and to date, neither he nor his wife, nor his son have been heard from. The only thing suggesting that they are together are five pictures that the Chinese authorities anonymously posted onto an overseas Internet forum, boxun.com, days after his scheduled release date. The pictures showed Hada along with his wife and son in what appears to be a hotel room. The post had only a brief caption saying Mongolia's Hada released after 15 years and reunited with his family. The exact same pictures were handed over to Hada's sister-in-law the next day on a CD at her residence with no explanation being given. Days later, only after repeated demands, the authorities told her that Hada and the family members are "enjoying a quiet reunion in a five-star hotel" and did not wish to be disturbed. But no location for the hotel was given.

And around the time of the Nobel Peace ceremony, more than 100 of Mr. Liu's friends, family members and supporters, including Tiananmen mother Ding Zilin and her husband, were either put under house arrest or made missing.

While it is conventional wisdom that economic growth will help to improve human rights and promote democracy, this wisdom simply does not apply to China as well as people expect. So far, we have seen just the opposite in China, where the fruits of economic growth only strengthen the Government's confidence in its ability to perpetrate human rights violations. In some special yet widespread cases (such as land expropriation and house demolition, etc.), the need for economic development has become a ready excuse and motivation for human rights violations. As the 32 congressional members said in their letter to President Obama last week, "China touts its continued economic progress and integration into the world economy while refusing to acknowledge and uphold universal standards applicable to human rights. This was clearly manifest in the run-up to the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony,"

I urge the international community to stay alert to these severe human rights violations and put pressure on the Chinese government to change their ways. In the mean time I urgently call for your concrete support of Chinese grass-root civil rights activists.

Coming back to the question I raised at the outset, why should China's treatment of its citizens be an important concern for U.S. foreign policy toward China? Pundits and laymen can give a slew of analysis on and answers to this question, and some people can even denounce this question as irrelevant. But I just want to echo Phelim Kine's question from his Wall Street Journal article last Monday: Will a rising power that fails to honor commitments to its own people act responsibly to fulfill its commitments to other nations and their peoples?